

By Frank Start - VE3AJ as printed in Hi-Q, April, 1978

Would You Believe?

Take capacitors for instance. When they were called condensers, they built a real big one for the first Marconi Trans-Atlantic station on Cape Breton Island in 1908. The transmitter was a 100 kW spark and oscillatory circuit. It used a condenser consisting of 300 zinc plates, each 75 feet long by 25 feet wide, suspended on the cross beams of the wooden building by porcelain insulators 20 inches long and 1-1/2 inches diameter. When this was in operation and the Atlantic breezes blew through the cracks in the building and the plates come together, the noise was something awful. The circuit was fed by around 1200 Volts from storage batteries. (That in itself is a believe-it-or-not.) Somehow I managed to get one and now have one of those insulators among my souvenirs.

Japanese wireless operators have to know the International Morse Code. In addition, they have to know and learn a Japanese code which consists of 64 more characters. Also "some time back", there was a story in High-Q about a virgin Japanese wit operator.

At one time, the mail between ye olde Fort William and ye olde Port Arthur took seven days. It still does!

At one time, not so many years ago, there was a W/T station (that's Wireless Telegraph) on High Street behind Prospect Avenue School. A small brick building built in 1912 for ship-to-shore communication. The large T aerial was swung between two wooden poles 180 feet high. The original transmitter was a rotary spark type with an input of 5 kW. When this was going full blast, it was heard on every broadcast receiver in the neighbourhood regardless of where it was tuned. Later it was changed to a CW/ICW with a little less racket. It was closed in 1939.